

change at forty years of age; a long life; a sudden death; fond of family life and travelling; proficient in art and partial to military music; confident in the future but having little confidence in himself personally; a large heart but more philanthropically inclined towards collectivities than towards individuals; possessed of a deep sense of justice, the slightest injustice exasperating him; admiring audacity, strength, and authority while fond of liberty for himself; influenced more by his mind than by sensual passion at the outset of his love affairs, but afterwards extremely ardent."¹

The lack of self-confidence indicated by the palmist was confirmed by Zola to Dr. Toulouse, who found that the novelist's doubt of himself was excessive and unreasonable.

He frequently feared that he might be unable to accomplish his daily task, finish the book he had begun, or conclude the speech he was delivering. At one period, before he could go to bed he had to satisfy a peculiar craving to touch and retouch certain articles of furniture, open and reopen certain drawers. Arithmomania pursued him: he was for ever counting the gas lamps in one or another street, and the number of the houses. He long believed multiples of three to be of good augury, but later, as he told Goncourt, multiples of seven inspired him with most confidence.

Moreover, he was so susceptible to thunder and lightning

that whenever a storm burst over Mēdan all
the shutters
had to be closed and all the lamps lighted,
after which lie
would often bandage M's eyes with a
handkerchief. Even
when there was no storm and he found himself
in absolute
darkness, he was occasionally troubled by
what seemed to
be luminous phenomena.

i Published in 1893.